

Mutual Aid Frequency Notice

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Frequency Use Advisory: Interface with North Dakota Users

Issue

During recent planning sessions in Eastern Montana, it was noted that programming of commonly used mutual aid frequencies in Montana and North Dakota radios may create an unforeseen consequence of preventing interoperability. Specifically, a number of agencies in North Dakota may have tone control on the receive side of commonly used mutual aid frequencies. The corresponding Montana agencies and mutual aid guidelines require no transmit or receive tones. In response scenarios, this could create a risk where Montana units transmitting without a tone may not be able to communicate with North Dakota units with CTCSS tone of 156.7 Hz on the receive side. This could create responder safety issues, especially for tactical fire and search and rescue operations. The documented channels involved with this issue include:

Frequency	Montana Channel Name	North Dakota/National Channel
154.2800 MHz	MAROON	VFIRE21
154.2650 MHz	CORAL	VFIRE22
154.2725 MHz	COPPER	VFIRE24
154.2875 MHz	BURGUNDY	VFIRE25
154.3025 MHz	CRIMSON	VFIRE26
155.1600 MHz	VIOLET	SARNFM

Recommendations

In response to this issue, the Department of Administration, Public Safety Services Bureau, Frequency Coordination Program in consultation with a number of state and local agencies in Montana and North Dakota, is recommending several procedures that can assist in alleviating this risk.

1. Montana state and local agencies who regularly work fire and/or search and rescue operations near the North Dakota border should review their communication plans in preparation for the 2013 fire season. Agencies are encouraged to identify these frequency issues in their planning, and coordinate with agencies in Montana and North Dakota to avoid using tactical channels that create this risk. SCARLET/VLAW23 (154.2950 MHz) does not have this conflict, and is an option for primary tactical operations. RED (154.0700 MHz) is not part of the Federal interoperability channel and does not have tone control; however, Montana agencies should be aware that not all North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming agencies, which may assist through mutual aid, will have this channel.
2. Montana response agencies are encouraged to add the Federal interoperability CTCSS tone of 156.7 Hz on the transmit side of ALL mutual aid frequencies to avoid future problems. This addition can be completed in a systematic way as radio programming is upgraded in the future.
3. The State of North Dakota is encouraging their agencies to drop the 156.7 Hz CTCSS tone on the 'receive' side of Federal mutual aid channels as agencies upgrade their programming.
4. The Montana Frequency Coordination Program is recommending that agencies include both the Montana Mutual Aid Color Channel Name and the National Interoperability Designation (example VLAW, VFIRE, VMED) in communication plans and channel names on radios. Both the color channel name and national designator should be communicated when assigning frequency resources on incidents involving Federal agencies or agencies from other states.

The continued goal of the State of Montana is to maintain mutual aid frequency resources that support responder safety and operations. If you have any questions or comments regarding this advisory, please contact Scott Bradford, Montana Mutual Aid Frequency Manager, at sbradford@mt.gov or 406-444-2782.